

# BANNER RIDGE WINTER YURT GUIDE

The Banner Ridge yurt is ideally located for Nordic skiers and snowshoers. Over 27 miles of groomed and 50 miles of marked ski trails are 300 yards from the front door. The yurt is located just off a high ridge in a protected north facing bowl. Looking north and down over 3000 feet in elevation you can see the South Fork of the Payette River, Bear Valley, and Scott Mountain. At 6500 feet the view of the Sawtooth Mountains is spectacular. The snow is usually powder and very deep. This yurt is a telemarker and snowboarder heaven with its long, open slopes. Thousands of feet of untracked powder are available 100 feet away. Snow is usually available for skiing from December 1 to April 15.

## **Difficulty:**

Intermediate. The difficulty of touring trails can increase in poor snow conditions and weather. The route to Banner Ridge yurt includes a long steep section at the beginning and may require you to remove your skis and walk up. Climbing skins are recommended for those with heavy packs. Individuals should be thoroughly prepared and travel with someone who has been to the yurt and can readily find it. The Elkhorn loop trail is generally groomed Thursday or Friday from December 1 to March 15. You should not count on the trail being groomed, but a freshly groomed trail will substantially reduce the amount of energy necessary to get to the yurt.

## **Where to Park:**

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21. An Idaho Park N' Ski permit is required to park in this plowed area. Please park vehicles close together on the high end of the parking lot next to the highway. The Department of Transportation snow plow operators become frustrated when they cannot plow a lot because cars are parked in the middle. You should bring a shovel because you might have to dig your car out in case it gets plowed in. Do not park on Highway 21.

## **How To Get to the Yurt:**

The trails are marked with blue and yellow diamond shapes, called blazes, attached to trees. The recommended approach is to take the Elkhorn loop trail clockwise to the yurt turn-off. At the first intersection of the Elkhorn loop trail, just .2 miles from the parking lot, continue straight up the Elkhorn loop trail. This will take you past the Banner trail intersection and up onto the scenic Banner Ridge. Stay on the blue blazed Elkhorn loop trail until you get back into the trees. At 2.0 miles you will come to a sharp right 90-degree turn in the trail. Look for a large "Bear Crossing" sign at the Cougar trail intersection. From here, follow the yellow blazes about 300 yards generally east and north until you come to the yurt. From the "Bear Crossing" sign you will follow the Cougar trail for about 50 yards. If you are going to the Banner Ridge yurt, do not continue traveling on the Cougar trail beyond this point. When you reach a roadbed, the yellow Banner Ridge yurt's blazes veer to the north. The yurt is tucked in a bowl on the north side.

## **Elevation Gain and Distance:**

About 680 feet rise over 2 miles (one-way) via the Elkhorn loop trail directly to the top of Banner Ridge. This is the shortest route but there is one long steep section to climb.

## **Wood Pile:**

Wood for the stove is located in a pile under a tarp 30 feet west of the yurt behind a large evergreen. A secondary wood pile is located about 15 feet uphill from the main wood pile. Please cover the wood pile with the tarp after use.

**Water:**

If you melt snow for water, we recommend boiling it for 10 minutes before using it. There may be water available other than melting snow over the wood stove. The route to the water source is marked with 3"x 3" red, square blazes placed on wood 4"x 4" posts. From the yurt, travel down the drainage about 150 yards and down 50 feet in elevation until you come to a road bed. Turn right on this road and travel 200 yards. At this point, look downhill about 30 feet to see a 4x4 wooden post sticking out of the snow. Five feet downhill from the base of this pole is a spring that comes out of a white plastic pipe. This spring may or may not be frozen.

**Special Equipment Needed:**

Several members of the party should carry portable snow shovels.

**Avalanche and White-Out Hazard:**

Chances of an avalanche are low as long as Elkhorn loop trail is used. Avalanches can occur on nearby slopes. The final one-mile to the yurt is on Banner Ridge, which is a high treeless, exposed ridge. We do not recommend travel to the yurt in high wind and heavy snow conditions, or at night. White outs are common along this section of trail.

**Maps Needed:**

Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System, USFS Forest Road, and USGS 7.5 minute topographic, "Lowman."

**Global Positioning System Locations (UTM):**

Banner Ridge Yurt	11 T 613329 E
	4876810 N

Banner Ridge Parking Lot	11 T 611840 E
	4875230 N

**WARNING:**

**Winter travel and the use of a yurt can be dangerous. Do not undertake yurt trips without careful preparation and a serious discussion of the dangers with ALL members of your group.**